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**Virginia Woolf and Freud : The Implications of  
His Work on Her Mental Health**

**by**

**Massey Barner**

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**requirements for the degree of**

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Virginia Woolf is an author still known today for her work in using literature as a vehicle for understanding her own life. Woolf used her novels to uncover and explore parts of her own personal relationships, and molded them into prominent characters. Modern scholarship discussing Woolf has generally accepted the timeline of her life, which includes the sexual abuse inflicted on her by her two older half-brothers, George and Gerald Duckworth, from her age 6 to 22. In dealing with this trauma in her later years, Woolf began seeking help in dealing with her pain through the study of psychoanalysis. What she was looking for was a link between the pain she felt as a child, and the severe depression she suffered from as an adult. Naturally, as he was the most widespread psychoanalyst of his time, she fell upon Freud's work, and was enraptured. This essay moves to analyze the effect of Freud's work on Woolf's mental state, and to discuss to what degree it may have disturbed her, and even exacerbated her already declining mental state toward the end of her life.

### **On George and Gerald - An Overview of Her Upbringing, and a Timeline of Woolf's Abuse**

Virginia Woolf was born Virginia Stephens in 1882, in nearly the middle of what historians consider the Victorian Era. Virginia Woolf's life, and struggles with abuse and mental health, were framed by the societal norms of the Victorian Era. This historical context is significant, because understanding the society of the Victorian Era helps us to understand just how suppressed her feelings would have been. One

example of this is the fact that there was no language for mental health, or mental disorders, nor was it an acceptable subject for discussion; women were either diagnosed 'hysteric,' which this essay will elaborate on further, or one was institutionalized, deemed too unacceptably disturbed to be near society. The same norms went for abuse, of any kind, but especially sexual abuse, as sex still remained an utterly taboo topic, and for women especially was shameful, whether consensual or otherwise. The main priority for everyone in this society was curating a well-positioned facade: a seemingly happy family portrait of healthy, well-off individuals. These expectations were not missing from the lifestyles of the Stephens family.

To begin, a brief overview of Woolf's family tree is useful. Her father, Leslie Stephen, first married Harriet Stephen, and had his first daughter Laura. Woolf's mother, Julia Stephens, first married Herbert Duckworth, and bore Stella, Gerald and George. Once Julia and Leslie married, they together had Vanessa, Thoby and Virginia. This lineage means that George and Gerald Duckworth were Woolf's half-brothers, sons from her mother's first marriage. Leslie Stephens was a distant, and non-emotive father. Julie Stephens was a mother known for her love of her sons; this is not to say that she did not care for her daughters or step-children, however during the course of her life, she made it seem to Virginia and Vanessa, as they stated themselves, that her main priority was helping to maintain the happiness of her sons, at any cost. This preference instilled in the children a feeling of competition when it came to affection or acknowledgement from their parents. Subsequently, Louise DeSalvo agrees that a

further analysis of her family structure and interrelationships shows that “conditions under which the children in the Stephen family were raised precipitated a lifelong history of sexual rivalry,” (84). DeSalvo is referring to the relationship that eventually formed between Virginia and Vanessa, as Virginia sought out attention from partners of Vanessa’s, as Vanessa was seeing them. This sexual rivalry can be analyzed as an effect of consistently being compared to one another by Gerald, as he came of age and pursued each of them socially, instilling a sense of inherent competition between the young girls, who were 16 and 14 (Vanessa being eldest). DeSalvo further asserts that nobody in the Stephens family, namely the children, were taught that “to control one’s sexual desires was something desirable, that it was, in fact, possible,” (84). An example of this is the relationship that formed between Virginia and Clive Bell, during the time that he was dating Vanessa; because she was never taught to limit her desires, she acted on them, which resulted in her becoming involved with people who already had partners, including that of her own sister.

It is ultimately accepted in modern Woolf scholarship (DeSalvo, Eberly, Henke, Lilienfeld) that Woolf was sexually abused by her two half-brothers, George and Gerald Duckworth. DeSalvo establishes that “the pattern of abuse lasted for many, many years, from roughly 1888, when she was six or seven, through 1904,” and further, that “[a] pattern of abuse existed within the Stephen family,” (8). Woolf herself wrote, “I still shiver with shame at the memory of my half brother, standing me on a ledge, aged about 6, and so exploring my private parts,” (Letters V.5, 167). Woolf also writes of

different accounts of assault, both by George and Gerald, most obviously in *22 Hyde Park Gate* and *A Sketch of the Past*.

The abuse ended at 22 after her suicide attempt; following the deaths of both her father and then her mother, Woolf became so afraid of the presence of her two brothers and their presence in her life that now seemed eminent, that she threw herself out of a window. Following her suicide attempt, she realized that she was finally free enough to liberate herself from her abusers, and so she did.

Woolf's abuse was a contested aspect of her life by many Woolf scholars, despite her autobiographical writings of the accounts, up until 1986, with DeSalvo being the first to condemn other authors for disavowing it. Amongst Woolf's biggest contrairs was her cousin, Quentin Bell. In his biography of Woolf, he insisted that any kind of sexual acts that occurred in her mind (as he would not recognize the reality of her abuse) were materializations of "her inherent shyness in sexual matters, on the cancer of her mind, on the corruption of her spirit," (DeSalvo, 3). Bell was cognizant of a kind of relationship, perhaps, between one or the other brother, though he never specified either one, but reduced any happenings that he purposed were not fact by any means, to a figment of Woolf's own desire. Essentially, Bell asserted that any sexual acts that may have occurred between Virginia and either George or Gerald would have been prompted by her, herself, and wanted in one way or another, if they had, in fact, happened. Bell was also under the same spell that Julia Stephens was, and viewed both

George and Gerald as very kind, generous and outgoing souls that could do no harm.

Beyond Quentin Bell, Woolf's abuse remained a secret, or at least a covertly known fact, amongst all of her family members for the duration of her life (with the exception of Vanessa, who was also inflicted by their abuse, although it is unknown to what extent). It is worth analysing, here, the intricacies of the Stephens family, and the way in which the typical family mode of the Victorian Era played a role. Victorian Era families typically resembled a nuclear-family model; the father was the head of the house, the one in charge of all decisions, but all of the work fell to the mother, including but not limited to the raising of the children, keeping the house, attending to guests, and the executions of decisions made by the father. Children were meant mainly to keep quiet, and were to be seen only when called upon. Julia Stephens constantly fell ill, and required Stella, and at one time Virginia, to take on her role as "angel of the house," to raise the other children, put food on the table and oversee the working of the home. This emotional dependency included George and Gerald, as they were incredibly emotionally dependant on Julia, and when she fell ill, this became the responsibility of their other siblings. Such was the way of the Victorian Era, and the function of the family fit for that time: men were to be supported in all ways, and women were to run everything, gracefully, while keeping a quiet voice and a calm demeanor, or risk being called hysterical.

The Victorian era itself did not lend any acknowledgement to mental health disorders,

thus anyone afflicted by such experiences, or any overly-emotional behavior in general, was either deemed hysterical and locked away in the home, or was institutionalized all together, if the problem became too threatening to the family image. Hysteria, then, was a blanket diagnosis in the Victorian Era:

[A] physician claimed that a quarter of all women suffered from hysteria. He cataloged possible symptoms, which included faintness, nervousness, insomnia, fluid retention, heaviness in abdomen, muscle spasm, shortness of breath, irritability, loss of appetite for food or sex, and “a tendency to cause trouble.” (victorian-era.org).

Cures for hysteria at the time namely included the rest-cure, developed by Silas Weir Mitchell, which absolved women of any kind of activity, be it physical or social, or for greater cases, electrotherapy or even hysterical paroxysm, which was the masturbation of women by their doctors (victorian-era.org).

In addition to all of this, another reason for Woolf's silence may have been that an example was set before her of what would happen if she expressed her feelings, be they of her depression or her abuse. Virginia's half-sister, Laura, was 16 when she was essentially locked away from the rest of her family, in a far wing of 22 Hyde Park Gate, the family home. Laura was a “troubled” teen, outspoken, and difficult to deal with. As a result, Leslie decided that she was not to be a part of the family, lest she give any of the other children ideas on how to behave. Leslie hired a woman to keep Laura's chambers and to watch over Laura; subsequently, Laura was largely unseen by the



other children for the bulk of Woolf's childhood. Because of the way in which Woolf watched her family cast aside Laura, she herself kept a tight lip when it came to her own emotions and struggles. Leslie had successfully set an example of what would happen to the children, were they to exhibit aspects of madness. From Leslie's perspective we can assume that DeSalvo was right in asserting that writing Laura off as "mad" and locking her away "absolved a family of guilt and responsibility," (218).

Woolf's early published short stories, aptly titled *Terrible Tragedy in a Duckpond*, and *The Experiences of a Pater-familias*, which came out in publications of the *Hyde Park News*, created by the children together, show an effort on her behalf to reveal to her family what she was going through. From the very titles, we can see how they point to this effort, her need to have her voice be heard, mostly with the similarity between 'Duckpond' and 'Duckworth'. However, this frankly brave act of Woolf's never materialized into any kind of action from her parents, other than her family recognizing her literary prowess at an early age.

**How We Can Analyse Woolf Today - A Study of Victims of Incestual  
Sexual Abuse**

When Woolf recounts her childhood in her own writing, she recalls that everything felt as though it were seen through “some membrane”; her memories are blurry, as were her days as she went through them. She can recall very few memories, but remembers peaks of pure bliss, times when she was nothing but happy, and those memories stick out to her specifically, although she remembers hardly anything else (*Moments of Being*, 66). We also know from Woolf’s writing that memories of her abuse did not resurface for many years, and the resurfacing of these memories was the inspiration behind her short story, *22 Hyde Park Gate*, which ends with a scene in which George comes into her room calling out, “[O]h beloved. Beloved--,” as he throws himself onto her bed. The final sentence reads, “...George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also,” (22 *Hyde Park Gate*, 227). Alice Miller notes that this lack of memory is typical of a survivor of incestual abuse:

The normal reaction to such injury should be anger and pain: since children in this hurtful kind of environment, however, are forbidden to express their anger and since it would be unbearable to experience their pain all alone, they are compelled to suppress their feelings, repress all memory of the trauma, and idealize those guilty of the abuse. Later they will have *no memory of what was done to them*. (*The Untouched Key*, 3)

It also makes sense that she would not have remembered the event until she did so,

and when she did it was with great clarity, as is also typical for survivors of incest: “Traumatic events exist in a kind of time lag; they are not experienced fully by the victim at the time of the trauma, yet they recur with startling intensity, with a compulsive force over which the victim is powerless” (Moran, *Gunpowder Plots*, 195). Woolf used that feeling of powerlessness, and channeled it into her literature, as a vice and a vehicle for understanding, or at least exploration of, her pain.

Often when she writes about the pain or shame that she recalls feeling as a child, she uses language that separates herself from her surroundings, even in their recollection. We see an example of this in the last line of 22 *Hyde Park Gate*, shown above, with the use of “those poor Stephen girls.” This separates her from the person she is inflicting the act on. This loss of agency happens frequently in her diary entries, also, in one case with the same use of, the term “...poor creature,” directly after describing how she is feeling sad (Diary V.5, 219). As her mental health worsened, Woolf displayed what we know today are signs of being a victim of assault. As Toni McNaron observed, Woolf used her writing so that “she could gain a certain mastery over the ugly details of her past,”(56). This separation is something we know that victims of childhood sexual abuse use as a coping mechanism, to allow for the feeling of distance from what has happened to them and from their everyday selves. As Patricia Moran notes, this separation is imperative because “[t]he experience of shame is, furthermore, soul-destroying, in part because the self feels radically cut off from the other or from society in general,” (*Gunpowder Plots*, 190). Because victims of sexual assault feel that

there is shame in what happened to them, and further internalize it, they become shut off. McNaron notes that “many women today report having created fantasy realms in order to endure the annihilating nature of their sexual abuse,” (52). This becomes a helpful mode of dealing with this shame, that is, by deflecting it to another person, making one to feel like the shame isn’t ‘yours’ but is that of this other entity

We can also refer to the way in which Woolf remembers her childhood, as a marker of her abuse. DeSalvo agrees that “[c]hildren also depict themselves as tiny beings, often within enclosed spaces, just like Woolf’s grape image,” (107). What is meant by this grape image is how Woolf accounts for her childhood memories, feeling as though she remembers all the while experiencing life as through the skin of a grape, shielded and yet also unable to see out into the broader world. As an adult, she describes this feeling of being “embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool,” (*Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, 117). This feeling is something Woolf stated herself that she never lost. DeSalvo comments further, stating that the “similarity between Woolf’s feelings as an adult, of being encased in cotton wool, and her description of her childhood memory of living life inside a grape is significant, for it suggests that Woolf was depressed even as a child,” (106). This is useful for understanding Woolf’s childhood, knowing that her depression began very early in her life, perhaps as a direct result of the molestation by Gerald at age 6.

A metaphor that Woolf often relies on is that of drowning; DeSalvo explains that

“drowning metaphors are frequently used by incest victims,” (11). This assertion is another example of her depression manifesting from her abuse. Further, Woolf even wrote that she was left an orphan “in a sea of halfbrothers,” (*Am I a Snob?*, 204). She may also have used her abuse to build the stage for a scene in her novel *To the Lighthouse*. The scene in question explains that James was, “standing between her knees, very stiff,” as, “the arid scimitar of the male [rose], which smote mercilessly again and again...[with] James, [still standing] between her knees...” (*To the Lighthouse*, 59–60). The repetition here is significant; this was how she was placed on the ledge during her first sexual abuse at the hands of Gerald. Another prevalent reference is the phallic one, referring to James’ sex organ as a scimitar, or a sword. This metaphor carries the weight of the experience for Woolf; being seated on the shelf, being fondled by her brother as he became aroused, inflicted upon her a sense of danger, as though a weapon were being used against her, and she was rendered powerless, as he stood “stiff between her legs.” Simply put, we can see this as, “an attempt to cloak the horrors of lived experience, and a means through which she can safely retell the story of her trauma in order to continue to live with it,” (McNaron, 61).

This is not Woolf’s first or only attempt to use her literature as a vehicle for exploring her abuse. Another example which shows Woolf trying to work through a repercussion of her abuse comes from her novel, *The Years*: “An oval white shape hung in front of her -- dangling, as if it hung from a string,” (41). This is hugely significant for Woolf, because it is a reference to what she calls her own “looking-glass complex.” When

Gerald stood her “on a ledge,” during his first attack on her, he did so in a spot that placed Woolf directly in front of a hallway mirror, which means that she watched her abuse happen to her in the reflection of that mirror. From that experience, she developed her self-coined looking-glass complex, in which through much of her adult life, she could hardly if at all, look at herself in mirrors (*Moments of Being*, 69). In a diary entry of Woolf’s she discusses her feelings toward her abuse, ending with the remark, “Why should I have felt shame then?” (Diary V.5, 460). This reveals Woolf’s inner dilemma, questioning why she still felt shameful over what happened to her, even over seeing herself in a mirror. An answer to this question was posed by Moran: “That Woolf herself linked her ambivalent ‘looking glass shame’ -- the compulsive and yet shameful specular encounter with her own image -- to her experience of sexual molestation further supports the link between the forbidden sights and experiences and subsequent shame and silence.” (*Gunpowder Plots*, 194). With this kind of inquiry from Woolf herself, and her link of her abuse to her “looking-glass complex” as Moran lays out, we can assume that Woolf was reaching a point where her beliefs differed from what she was learning from studying psychoanalysis at the time. Instead of revelling in that shame, she wanted to discover how to move on.

Elaborating on this idea, we can observe the function of shame in Woolf’s life, as seen through her literature: “The tangled roots of shame and traumatic sexual experience, then, underpin Woolf’s treatment of adult female characters; their invisible presence is key to understanding Woolf’s revolutionary project of exploring “the sexual lives of

women,”(*Gunpowder Plots*, 181). Woolf truly was a pioneer in writing, because she sought a kind of truth about being a woman that was previously unexplored. The inner lives of women were not a topic of discussion, as their roles in Victorian Era society were not valued. So for Woolf to be the first not to just write about the mistreatment of women, but also with the intention of exploring her own gross mistreatment, is truly remarkable.

## **Virginia and Freud**

Before diving into the intricacies of Freud’s work and its effect on Woolf, I believe it is also important to note how heavily the threat of Germany invading the UK weighed on Virginia and her husband, Leonard. It took a huge mental toll to the degree that they had decided on a death pact, were the Nazis to invade England. Their London home had been destroyed by bombs, and as they resided alone in a more quaint home, they agreed upon starting the car in the closed garage as their suicide-pact, so as to save themselves from the torment that would surely be inflicted, were they to be captured by the Nazis. During this time, with this threat hanging over her head, Woolf was also in the process of working on her last novel, and as DeSalvo notes, “[T]he threat of the invasion gave her work great urgency, “ (101). Leonard himself commented on how these pressures together affected Woolf, “[T]here was in fact something much more savage and sinister beneath the surface, and in the next few years one occasionally



caught a glimpse of it,” (Woolf, *A Biography*, 15). This, in conjunction with the reading of Freud and the grappling with his ideas and how they affected her, are what I believe had the biggest negative impact on Woolf’s mental health, during the last two years of her life.

The first experience Woolf would have had with Freud’s work is through that of her other psychiatrists or physicians. Because Freud was the first truly widespread psychoanalyst, his work seemed unparalleled at the time of its publication, and for years after. Victorian Era doctors took what he said and regurgitated it for many patients.

Originally, in 1896, Freud introduced the seduction theory, which stated that the condition of hysteria was predicated by, if not a direct result of, childhood sexual abuse. Freud himself claimed, “[A]t the bottom of every case of hysteria there are one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience,” (1896, cited by *Thou Shalt Not be Aware*, 117). As put by DeSalvo, “Freud himself described that he abandoned the seduction theory because he couldn't believe that so many respectable men were involved in sexually abusing their daughters,” (7). Because of Freud’s redaction of the seduction theory, Woolf’s condition was treated as purely neurosis, hysteria, anything but what it truly was : the result of her sexual abuse. Woolf had been diagnosed with hysteria, as any woman in the Victorian Era who suffered from any bout of emotional distress or as far as mental health disorders, was diagnosed.

After the redaction of the seduction theory, Freud turned that idea into a facet of his Oedipus complex, asserting that instead of hysteria stemming from a place in the mind deeply perturbed by sexual abuse, it was instead a result of undealt-with sexual desires, stemming from childhood. The furthering of this idea also supported the base for the aforementioned hysterical paroxysm. The Oedipus complex also held that it was incestuous infantile desires that drove children, and materialized in adulthood as neurosis, which was what he diagnosed Woolf with. From this, Woolf would have deduced that her abuse was her own fault, that because of some unconscious desire that Freud claimed was inherent in everyone, she had manipulated her sexual abuse into existence.

Woolf began keeping notes on her own mental state, and on March 1, 1937 she wrote: "...[T]his anxiety and nothingness surround me with a vacuum. It affects the thighs chiefly," (Diary 5, 63). At this late in her life, Woolf was still feeling *physical* pain, in addition to the mental pain that she felt, as a result of her abuse. She was still carrying the deep emotions that become embedded in victims of sexual assault, as we see in how she describes her anxiety affecting her thighs. Desalvo asserts that at this point, Woolf was living with the "fractured pieces that she could not yet assemble into a coherent, meaningful story to help her understand her depression," (114). Woolf was beginning to look introspectively, to analyze and better understand her own feelings, and perhaps her abuse.

Woolf and Freud met in January of 1939, when Freud was in his eighties, and very ill from cancer. Julia Briggs outlines their first introduction as such:

**Virginia Woolf met Sigmund Freud on:** The 28th of January 1939 at 20 Maresfield Gardens. **She said to him:** We have often felt guilty – if we had failed to win the Great War, perhaps Hitler would not have been. **He said to her:** It would have been infinitely worse if you had not won the war. **She gave him:** Her close attention. **He gave her:** A narcissus. **And the consequence was:** She finally read his work. (charleston.org.uk)

Woolf began reading Freud in December of 1939, after meeting him. Her diary entry for December 1 stated: “Began reading Freud last night; to enlarge the circumference...to get outside,”(*Diary* V.5, 248). In her next entry, she added that she was “gulping up Freud,” (*Diary* V. 5, 249). On December 9, she had already hit a breaking point while reading his work, writing, “Freud is upsetting: reducing one to whirlpool; & I daresay truly,”(*Diary* V.5, 298). The idea that her abuse was thought to be the derivative of her own desire was shell-shocking, dragging her into a “whirlpool,” drowning her in thought. Just as she began to view psychoanalysis as a potential source for guidance in how to cope with her feelings, and potentially move past them, it was explained to her in all ways how her childhood self, at the early age of six, must have felt some need for the molestation that her half-brothers inflicted.

What Woolf was concerned with, as Freud was, was the “question of the *significance* of dreams,” (*On Dreams*, 12). He goes on to say, “I am led to regard the dream as a sort of *substitute* for the thought processes, full of meaning and mention, at which I arrived after the completion of analysis,” (26). Further, Freud discusses how the combination of two people into one kind of entity in a dream carries a huge meaning, as it “compare[s] the original persons with each other,” (47). For Woolf this would mean that the figure with the “animal-man” that she saw in her dreams was a conglomerate of George and Gerald, of each of their abuse, and thus was all the more threatening.

Because Freud saw these kinds of dreams, and even the real events which inspired them, to be the action of an unspoken desire, Woolf would have read that “the wishful fantasies revealed by analysis in night dreams often turn out to be repetitions or modified versions of scenes from infancy,” (76). Again, this would tell her that the thing that has haunted her all her life is nothing more than a *wishful fantasy* acted out by her younger self, and repeated in her dreams as such. The toll that this would have on someone in Woolf’s position is unimaginable. Freud goes further, stating that “[t]he ideational content which produces anxiety in us in dreams was once a wish but has since undergone repression,” (91). It is these “repressed infantile sexual wishes” which Freud claimed “provide the most frequent and strongest motive forces for the construction of dreams,” (107). When she went searching for answers about her nightmares, she was told that they were direct representations of her own desires, of her childhood desires. Subsequently, she would have believed that, since the dreams

are indicative of a real-life trauma, that the event in which her 6 year old self was fondled by her 15 year old brother in front of a mirror was indeed the product of her own desire, and that the resurfacing dreams also stem from that repressed desire.

What we can deduce from this analysis, is the way that Woolf may have felt. After a lifetime of suppressing the memory and the pain of her abuse, she finally began to look inward, in her 50's. She was seeking answers about her own mind; why was she depressed? How could she look at her depression from a point of understanding? Was finally facing and dealing with the trauma of her abuse a key to moving forward in handling her depression? These are questions she may have asked herself. However, when she was ready to start dealing with the scars left on her as a child, the scholarship of psychoanalysis at the time told her that her abuse was her fault -- a manifestation of inner desires felt by her childhood self. She was told that she had not been betrayed, but had herself created the possibility for the tremendously damaging experiences that were inflicted on her for all of her formative years, and further. Studying Freud taught her that her abuse was run-of-the-mill, the action subsequent of something that everyone felt, the culmination of feelings that all children feel. I believe that this, in conjunction with the pressure of the invading German presence in 1941, had a profound and devastating effect on Woolf's mental health, and may even have had an influence on her decision to walk herself into the River Ouse.

## **Conclusion**

Painting a full picture of Woolf's life is enriching for readers; because she so thoroughly used literature as a means to understanding her own life, by way of writing characters from her own life into fictional characters, one can better understand what is at work when the intricacies of her family dynamic are studied. Understanding how literature worked as a vice for Woolf is a helpful tool in understanding her writing as a whole. For example, understanding her relationship to her father, Leslie, helps readers to better engage with the father character from *The Waves*, because one can understand that the stand-offish, cold attitude of the father was Woolf's own experience with her father. A more relevant example would be *Mrs. Dalloway*: Clarissa and Peter's relationship often mirrors that of Woolf's own relationship to either George or Gerald. However, she used the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* to rewrite that portion of her life, and writes Clarissa as the point-man for their relationship, essentially rewriting her own relation to George and Gerald as the way she wished it had been.

Through studying her relationship to Freud's work, one can see the effect it had on her mind. The last two years of Woolf's life were spent in a place far from her normal arena of living, under immense pressure from writing a book while managing her depression, and from the invading Nazis. In Leonard Woolf's own words, he and Virginia were, "among the proscribed," people who would rather have committed suicide than, "fall into German hands," (*The Journey Not the Arrival Matters*, 15). The

combination of all of this, at a time when she was finally ready to face, head-on, her pain and its roots, she was told that it was her fault, her own fantasy come to life. To have that reckoning of her mental health, both at the current time and from her lifetime of experience, must have felt crushing, especially when considered with the rest of the intense pressure she was feeling. Knowing this can help us deal with the tragedy of her suicide, and to better analyze her last works.

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